

[Home](#) > [Coping With Cancer](#) > [Caring for a Loved One](#) > Being a Caregiver

PDF generated on July 21, 2016 from <http://www.cancer.net/coping-with-cancer/caring-loved-one/being-caregiver>

Being a Caregiver [1]

This section has been reviewed and approved by the [Cancer.Net Editorial Board](#) [2], 04/2015

Key Messages:

- The role of a caregiver will often vary depending on the situation and is likely to change over time.
- Caregiving can be both rewarding and challenging.
- Caregivers should remember to take care of themselves while providing care for the person with cancer.

Caregivers are often family members or friends who provide important physical, practical, and emotional support to a person with cancer. Caregivers may have a range of responsibilities on a daily or as-needed basis. Below are some of the responsibilities caregivers may take on:

- Providing support and encouragement
- Giving medications
- Helping manage symptoms and side effects
- Coordinating medical appointments
- Providing a ride to appointments
- Assisting with meals
- Helping with household chores
- Handling insurance and billing issues

Types of caregiving

There are many ways to be a caregiver. For some, it may mean providing 24-hour care. For others, it may mean researching medical information or arranging for help. Each situation is different, and no one scenario applies to all people with cancer and their families. Moreover, as

the disease and treatment changes, so will the caregiver's role.

Caregivers may live in the home, share responsibilities, or care from a distance.

Live-in caregiver. One person, such as a spouse or partner assumes the role of the primary or lead caregiver. A nearby friend or neighbor may also be the caregiver. According to the Family Caregiver Alliance, most caregivers live within 20 minutes of the person they care for.

[Shared responsibility caregiver](#) [3]. Some caregivers share the responsibility with other family members. Often, the person who provides each caregiving task is able to best perform that task.

Combining caregiving among family members is often challenging because previous conflicts are may surface or worsen. However, caring for a person with cancer can also bring families closer together.

[Long-distance caregiver](#) [4]. In some instances, a family member or friend who does not live near the person with cancer manages care. A long-distance caregiver often coordinates services by phone or by email.

A long-distance caregiver may arrange for local volunteers, friends, and colleagues to help the person with cancer.

Caring for a person with cancer who lives far away is often emotionally exhausting. The distance between caregiver and the person they care for can magnify the usual caregiving worries. It may also cause financial stress. However, there are steps you can take to be an effective caregiver no matter how far away you are.

The challenges and joys of caregiving

To manage the challenges of caregiving, start by assessing all of your [caregiving options](#) [5]. Then, find ways to [take care of yourself](#) [6] while providing care.

The challenges of caregiving may include:

- Physical and emotional stress
- Less time for personal and family life
- The need to balance job and caregiving responsibilities
- Financial stress
- Lack of privacy
- Feelings of isolation and loneliness

It is also helpful to focus on the fulfilling aspects of caregiving:

- Caregiving shows the person who is ill that you commit to providing as much help and

support as you can.

- Caregiving makes a difference to the quality of life and well-being of the person who is ill.
- Caregiving gives you a unique opportunity to develop or renew a relationship with the person who is ill.
- Caregiving helps set a tone of respect and caring for other family members, regardless of their situations.

To learn more, [watch a video](#) [7] about caregiving.

More Information

[Tips for Caregiving](#) [8]

[Spotlight On: Oncology Social Workers](#) [9]

[Young Adults Caring For a Parent With Cancer](#) [10]

[Parenting While Caring for a Parent With Cancer](#) [11]

Additional Resources

[National Cancer Institute: When Someone You Love is Being Treated for Cancer](#) [12]

[Family Caregiver Alliance](#) [13]

[National Alliance for Caregiving](#) [14]

[Caregiver Action Network](#) [15]

University of California San Francisco: [Orientation to Caregiving: A Handbook for Family Caregivers of Patients with Brain Tumors](#) [16] (PDF)

Links

[1] <http://www.cancer.net/coping-with-cancer/caring-loved-one/being-caregiver>

[2] <http://www.cancer.net/about-us>

[3] <http://www.cancer.net/node/25032>

[4] <http://www.cancer.net/node/25234>

[5] <http://www.cancer.net/node/25029>

[6] <http://www.cancer.net/node/25031>

[7] <http://www.cancer.net/node/27411>

[8] <http://www.cancer.net/node/25236>

[9] <http://www.cancer.net/node/30961>

[10] <http://www.cancer.net/node/24746>

[11] <http://www.cancer.net/coping-and-emotions/caregiver-support/parenting-while-caring-parent-cancer>

[12] <http://www.cancer.gov/publications/patient-education/when-someone-you-love-is-being-treated>

[13] <https://caregiver.org/>

[14] <http://www.caregiving.org/>

[15] <http://www.caregiveraction.org/>

[16] http://neurosurgery.ucsf.edu/tl_files/NS_Main/Brain%20Tumor%20Caregivers%20Handbook.pdf